

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for licensing time-based software comprising the steps of:
loading time-based software onto a client machine, wherein said time-based software requests user information including an amount of time requested by the user for using said time-based software and submits said user information to an authentication server through a network;
determining if the user is approved, wherein if the user is approved, further comprising the step of:
the authentication server activating the time-based software for an amount of time approved, wherein if the user uses the time-based software for less than the amount of time approved, the user crediting any remaining amount of time back to the authentication server.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein if the user is not approved, further comprising the step of sending a rejection message back to the software.
3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of determining if the user is approved further comprises the steps of:
matching the user information with a user account stored in said authentication server:
and
checking the user account for a time credit amount, wherein the user is approved if the user information matches the user account and the time credit amount is greater than zero.
4. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said user information includes a user name and a password.

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the network comprises the Internet.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of the time-based software submitting user information to the authentication server further comprises submitting order information to the authentication server, said order information comprising a software product ID and a client machine IP address.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the time-based software displays a log-in access box for requesting the user information, the log-in access box including a balance checking feature for allowing the user to check a total amount of time remaining in a user account.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein if the user is approved, further comprising the step of updating a time credit amount in the authentication server.

10. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein if the time credit is greater than or equal to the amount of time requested, the amount of time approved comprises the amount of time requested.

11. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein if the time credit is less than the amount of time requested, the amount of time approved comprises the time credit.

12. (Currently amended) A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by machine to perform the method steps for licensing time-based software comprising the steps of:

loading time-based software onto a client machine, wherein said time-based software requests user information including an amount of time requested by the user for using said time-based software and submits the user information to an authentication server through a network;

determining if the user is approved, wherein if the user is approved, further comprising the step of:

the authentication server activating the time-based software for an amount of time approved, wherein if the user uses the time-based software for less than the amount of time approved, the user crediting any remaining amount of time back to the authentication server.

13. (Original) The program storage device of claim 12, wherein the step of determining if the user is approved further comprises the steps of:

matching the user information with a user account stored in said authentication server; and

checking the user account for a time credit amount, wherein the user approved if the user information matches the user account and the time credit amount is greater than zero.

14. (Previously presented) The program storage device of claim 12, wherein said user information includes a user name and a password.

15. (Cancelled)

16. (Original) The program storage device of claim 12, wherein the network comprises the Internet.

17. (Original) The program device of claim 12, wherein if the user is approved, further comprising the step of updating a time credit amount in the authentication server.

18. (Original) The program storage device of claim 12, wherein the step of the time-based software submitting user information to the authentication server further comprises submitting order information to the authentication server, said order information comprising a software product ID and a client machine IP address.

19. (Original) The program storage device of claim 12, wherein the time-based software displays a log-in access box for requesting the user information, the log-in access box including a balance checking feature for allowing the user to check a total amount of time remaining in a user account.

20. (Original) The program storage device of claim 13, wherein if the time credit is greater than or equal to the amount of time requested, the amount of time approved comprises the amount of time requested.

21. (Original) The program storage device of claim 13, wherein if the time credit is less than the amount of time requested, the amount of time approved comprises the time credit.

22. (Currently amended) A system for licensing time-based software comprising:
a time-based software loaded onto a client machine for requesting user information from a user including an amount of time requested by the user for using said time-based software; and
an authentication server for receiving said user information from said time-based software, wherein said authentication server determines if the user is approved, wherein if the user is approved, the authentication server activates the time-based software for an amount of time approved, wherein if the user uses the time-based software for less than the amount of time approved, any remaining amount of time is credited back to the authentication server by the user.

23. (Original) The system of claim 22, wherein the authentication server determines if the user is approved by matching the user information with a user account stored in said authentication server, and checking the user account for a time credit amount, wherein the user is approved if the user information matches the user account and the time credit amount is greater than zero.

24. (Cancelled)

25. (Original) The system of claim 22, wherein the authentication server further receives order information from the time-based software, said order information comprising a software product ID and client machine IP address.

26. (Previously presented) The system of claim 22, wherein the time-based software displays a log-in access box for requesting the user information, the log-in access box including a balance checking feature for allowing the user to check a total amount of time remaining in a user account.

27. (Original) The system of claim 22, wherein if the user is approved, further comprising the step of updating a time credit amount in the authentication server.

28. (Original) The system of claim 23, wherein if the time credit amount is greater than or equal to the amount of time requested, the amount of time approved comprises the amount of time requested.

29. (Original) The system of claim 23, wherein if the time credit amount is less than the amount of time requested, the amount of time approved comprises the time credit amount.

30. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the user is determined to be approved independent of a time and date the user makes the request for using said time-based software.

31. (Previously presented) The program storage device of claim 12, wherein the user is determined to be approved independent of a time and date the user makes the request for using said time-based software.

32. (Previously presented) The system of claim 22, wherein the user is determined to be approved independent of a time and date the user makes the request for using said time-based software.